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ABSTRACT

A study used the "Emergent Reading Ability Judgments for Favorite Storybooks" (ERAJFS) scale to provide an informative description of children's emergent reading behaviors during a school year. Subjects, children ranging in age from two and one half years to five years who were enrolled in a day care center classroom, took part in two reenactment interviews, one of a frequently used predetermined book, and a second of a favorite storybook chosen by the child. After the interviews were videotaped and transcribed, the ERAJFS scale was used to score them. Results showed a range of behaviors from labeling and commenting at the lower end of the scale to independent reading at its highest level. Though the preschool children had received no formal instruction in reading for other literacy activities, their storybook reenactments indicated a developing knowledge of written language. (JL)

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Tracking Emergent Reading Behaviors Through Storybook Re-enactments

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One of the major concerns of the educational system in our literate culture has been, and still is, the child's acquisition of reading. For several decades researchers and educators have focused on various specific instructional methods that were associated with the acquisition of reading skills. This focus has changed somewhat in recent years as researchers have begun to investigate the young child's knowledge about written language prior to formal instruction. The purpose of this paper is to describe an on-going study involving preschool children's re-enactments of favorite storybooks[1] which

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includes the use and evaluation of a scale for assessing emergent reading abilities. The scale used for assessment was the "Emergent Reading Ability Judgments for Favorite Storybooks" scale (ERAJFS) developed by Sulzby[2]. Specifically, this paper will report on a small subset of children (n=4) within the overall preschool project with respect to how the ERAJFS scale can be used to describe the development of emergent reading abilities of preschool children.

The term "storybook re-enactment" is used here to describe the child's verbal and non-verbal behaviors in re-creating the story for another person. During the storybook re-enactment the child is thought to use a variety of sources of information, which may derive largely from the child's memory for the specific text as well as a knowledge of text-like features. Supportive illustrations found in most storybooks may also be a source of information or retrieval cues used by the child during the re-enactment. Thus the child's re-creation of a textual entity may involve the recalling of specific segments of text either on a verbatim or a semantic level. It may also involve the use of illustrations to cue retrieval of specific text or to create a text that deviates from the original.

The use of children's storybook re-enactments as a medium in which children's emergent reading behaviors can be examined is supported by (1) anecdotal reports of preschool children's behavior with storybooks, (2) an analysis of the storybook as a text-type and (3) research involving storybook re-enactments of kindergarten children.

Anecdotal reports from parents and teachers have pointed to several types of responses by children to storybook experiences. Children may request to have the same storybook(s) read over and over. Children may

correct the adult's slightest departures from the established texts of highly familiar books. Children may spontaneously attempt to re-create the story with or without another listener present (Sulzby & Otto, 1982; see also Holdaway, 1979; Schickedanz , 1978; Taylor, 1980). These behaviors indicate that the storybook experience is a potentially memorable and pleasurable one for preschool children, as well as one that the child has been found to attempt to re-create on his/her own.

Analysis of the storybook as text-type was described by Sulzby (1982). In this analysis Sulzby examined four text-types that children may encounter in their early literacy experiences, i.e. basal readers, storybooks, children's own dictations and their handwritten compositions. Storybooks were described as having texts that are specifically written for the enjoyment and understanding of the topic by young children and not with "reading instruction" as a goal. Books that have been found to have the potential for becoming favorites are usually predictable and well-formed. The language phrasing and structure of the text may be both memorable and enduring due to rhythmic or other unique characteristics. Favorite storybooks are thought to provide support for the child's memory for text or anticipation of text, and thus support reading comprehension. These familiar storybook texts then can support the child in his/her attempts to match voice with known words. Letter-sound knowledge may be used then as a check upon anticipated words rather than for sounding-out.

Research involving the collection of storybook re-enactments of young children has taken several forms (Doake, 1981; Haussler, 1982; Sulzby, 1981; 1982). The basis for the ERAJFS scale used in the study

to be described in this paper was a study involving kindergarten children in which Sulzby (1981) collected storybook re-enactments from the children prior to any formal instruction in reading. The children were asked to select a "favorite" storybook and then "read" it to the examiner. Based on the analysis of these storybook re-enactments, Sulzby developed a scale for describing children's emergent abilities to read favorite storybooks. The scale, "Emergent Reading Ability Judgments for Favorite Storybooks," was then tested and expanded during a su sequent study. Sulzby (1982) collected storybook re-enactments from kindergarten children at two points in the school year, i.e. fall and spring. The re-enactment collections were part of a larger study, "Beginning Readers' Developing Knowledges About Written Language" (BRDKAWL). Books used in the re-enactments were chosen by the individual children as being a "favorite.". Results of the analysis using the ERAJFS scale indicated that the scale provided an informative description of children's emergent reading behaviors. Most of the children in the study increased in emergent reading ability as measured by the scale throughout the school year. In addition the ERAJFS scale was valuable in describing the differences between the children's emergent reading abilities.

The ERAJFS scale distinguishes between storybook re-enactments that are picture-governed and those that are print-governed as well as the re-enactments in which a complete textual entity was recited from those in which no "story" was formed. A copy of the ERAJFS scale, abridged version is located in Appendix A. The abridged scale is presented here to illustrate the placement levels of the preschool children's re-enactments.

The section that follows describes the methodology used for the data collection. Storybook re-enactments of the four children from the day care classroom will be detailed in terms of comparisons within each child over time and between children using the CRAJFS scale.

Method

Subjects

The children included in the on-going study are enrolled in a day care center classroom in a northwestern suburb of Chicago. The children range in age from two and one-half years to five years. Classroom enrollment is limited to 25 children and has fluctuated slightly throughout the study. Two-thirds of the children come from families that pay full tuition, while one-third of the children come from families that pay reduced tuition because of limited income. Slightly less than one-half of the children are in one-parent families. About one-fourth of the children are from Black, Hispanic, Oriental, Iranian or East Indian families.

Day care setting

The day care center was selected because the children were given abundant access to storybooks. Observations revealed that the daily schedule at the day care center provides opportunity for both group and individual experiences with storybooks. Formal group storytime involves the teacher reading one or more storybooks to the entire classroom. During the free-choice activity periods children are often observed to approach a teacher, asking the teacher to read to them individually or to a small group of children. Also during this time the children are

free to select storybooks for individual enjoyment and perusal. After naptime the children are encouraged to select a book for individual use during the quiet activity period before the afternoon snack is served.

Materials

The children's storybook re-enactments were elicited for specific books that were used in the classroom and were judged to be "favorites." For the January pilot study ten storybooks were identified by the classroom teachers as the children's "favorites." From this group of books the teachers selected books to be used in the classroom during the group storytimes for one week prior to the re-enactment interviews. There was a total of five books read. Only one book had been read three times during that week; the rest had been read twice. At the time of the interview each child selected two "favorite" books from the five that had been read at group storytimes.

In the May study the books introduced to the classroom consisted of six books, most of which had been used previously in similar studies (Doake, 1981; Haussler, 1981; Holdaway, 1979; Schickedanz, 1981; Sulzby, 1981). The books then were read in the classroom for the two weeks prior to the re-enactment interviews during the group storytimes and were available for the children's individual use. The book used the most in the group story sessions (Are You My Mother?) was used to elicit one re-enactment from each child. It had been read at five storytimes. In addition to the pre-determined book, each child selected a "favorite" book from the remaining five storybooks for the second re-enactment. The remaining books had each been read a minimum of two times at group storytime.

The August study involved the same procedures for book introduction. The books used were parallel in characteristics to those used in May. The book used the most in the classroom at storytime was A Pocket for Corduroy. It had been read five times. The remaining books had been read at least twice.

Procedures

During the week that followed the reading period the children were interviewed individually for the purpose of eliciting the storybook re-enactments. The interviews occurred during the morning free-choice activity period in a room that was near the classroom. For each re-enactment the examiner directly requested the child to "read to me." Graduated levels of encouragement were used to further elicit the re-enactment when the child did not respond to the "read to me" request. Procedures for prompting and encouragement followed those described in the Examiner's Manual. The procedures developed allow the child opportunity to do as much as s/he can before assistance is given. Through the re-enactment the focus was on the "story" as an enjoyable, shared activity. The interview sessions were videotaped and a separate audio tape was also made. Full verbal transcriptions from the video and audiotapes were made of each storybook re-enactment. A brief description of non-verbal behaviors accompanied the verbal transcription.

Scoring

Scoring of the storybook re-enactments on the ERAJFS scale was done by two trained judges. Initial scoring was made independently and was done while viewing the videotapes. When scoring disagreements indicated the need for more detailed information, the written transcript was used for the reconciliation. Judges were able to come to full agreement;

however, the agreement was conferred rather than independent. In a number of cases, the scoring procedures included noting where clarifications of the scale were needed and places where potential new levels might emerge.

Results

The re-enactments of the selected children show a range of behaviors from labelling and commenting at the lower end of the ERAJFS scale, C2, to independent reading at the highest level of the scale, Ala. The ERAJFS scale scores of these children over a seven-month period are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The January pilot was used as a basis for establishing procedures for the May and August studies. In addition the January data provide a look at the children's storybook re-enactments during that initial interview. The section that follows describes each of the four children's re-enactments of Are You My Mother? from the May study and placement of the re-enactments on the ERAJFS scale. Then the four children's re-enactments in August are highlighted and compared with their May re-enactments.

In the May study, the four children's re-enactments ranged from a rating of C1 for Maria to Ala for Kathy with the other two children at the B level, i.e. Mark at B1b and Nicki at B2b. Maria's re-enactment was action-governed. Her comments sounded like the action in the picture was occurring in the here and now. Analysis of her hand gestures and pointing behaviors also indicated the action-governed nature of her re-enactment. Maria frequently directed the adult to "look" during the

re-enactment, as shown in the two following segments:

Maria (age 4-2)

086 Child: (turns to page 5 and points to illustration) Lookit, the baby don't come up outta there (sweeping finger over next in picture, looks at adult; turns to page 6) Well, he, well, he, fly away (looks up at adult; turns to page 8, points to egg in nest in illustration, child makes jumping motion with hand). This is jumped and jump and jump but he broke that. (indicating egg shell)

093 Adult: Did he? (child nods in agreement)

093 Child: (turns to page 11) Now he can't find her mom (looks at adult while speaking).

....

100 Child: He falling (looks at adult, turns to page 21) But he don't run to Mom here (finger on page 22 on mother bird, finger moving back and forth) eh? Right? (looks at adult)

102 Adult: Hmmm.

102 Child: He can't find her (shakes head, turns to page 22). Lookit, he went by by all by hisself (points to picture, finger moving). Went by by the cat (glances at adult; turns page, sighs and leans back in chair) What's that? (points to illustration of hen, looks at adult)

Nicki's re-enactment was placed at the B2b level of emergent reading ability on the scale, which is the next highest level from that of Maria's re-enactment just discussed. When Nicki re-enacted Are You My Mother? her re-enactment was also governed by the pictures, but a story-like sequence could be inferred. The re-enactment was characterized by oral-like language, though the narrative was not linked together and thus did not form a coherent story. Throughout the re-enactment Nicki addressed interactive comments toward the adult. A segment of her re-enactment follows:

Nicki (age 3-6)

031 Child: He got it down (glances up at adult). Right there. (turns to page 20) And he's taking the worm. (turns to

page 23, points to kitten) He's not his mother (looks to adult). He didn't say anything. (turns to page 24) That's her (spoken softly). He's not his mother either (points to hen, looks at adult, turns to page 26) He not his mother (points to kitten)...And does he have a mudder? (looks to adult) He's gotta look for her (turns to page 38).

In contrast to Maria and Nicki, Mark's re-enactment was written language-like and involved a story that was similar to the original, though not verbatim. The re-enactment was placed at the B1b level. While the textual entity produced was not verbatim, there were phrases that sounded as if they were verbatim from the text or at least were "book language."

Mark (age 4-1)

200 Child: (turns to page 18) "I must go find my Mom." (turns to page 20) He just walked past her. (turns to page 22) He talked to a kitten. "Are you my mom?" (turns to page 24) But he just looked at him. "Are you my mom?" "No, I'm a hen." (turns to page 26) ...The kitten wasn't mom, the hen wasn't his mom. (turns to page 28) So he went up to a dog, and he said, "Are you my mom?"

Kathy's May re-enactment is characterized by actual reading of the print. She was clearly tracking print and occasionally followed the print with her finger, with voice-print matching. Kathy read the entire book with relatively few miscues. In the segment that follows, Kathy's miscues involve a word insertion and intonation that indicated a sentence boundary change; however, there was no significant meaning change.

Kathy (age 4-4)

Child:	Text:
The Snort went up. It went way, way up. And up and up. Up went the baby bird.	The Snort went up. It went way, way up. And up, up, up, went the baby bird.

Two months later when the August study was conducted there were some changes in the specific children's re-enactments with respect to placement on the ERAJFS scale while other children remained relatively at the same level. Nicki's first re-enactment in August was at the C2 level, labelling and commenting, while her second was at the B2b level of oral language-like attempts. While her first re-enactment in August was at a level lower than her first May re-enactment (C2 v C1), her second re-enactment in August was at the same level as the second May re-enactment. Thus, there was little overall change in Nicki's re-enactment levels from May to August. One of Mark's August re-enactments was placed at a level higher than any of his previous re-enactments, i.e. B1a, written language-like verbatim attempt for his re-enactment of The Great Big Enormous Turnip, A. Tolstoy. Mark's second re-enactment was at a level reported earlier in the May study, i.e. B1c, created story with written language influence. The rating of Maria's August re-enactments indicated that for the first time in seven months a story-like sequence could be inferred from one of her re-enactments, though the attempt was still disjointed, and thus was placed at the B2b level. In the August study, Kathy's re-enactments maintained the A1a level of independent reading that was found in her May re-enactments.

Discussion

In this paper, the ERAJFS scale developed by Sulzby was used to track the emergent reading behaviors of four preschool children. Though these preschool children have received no formal instruction in reading or other literacy activities, their storybook re-enactments indicate a developing knowledge of written language. This knowledge is evidenced by their ability to produce a textual entity that ranges in form from

labels and comments to oral-like language or written-like language to text that is read through voice-print match.

While the ERAJFS scale can be used as a guide to classifying children's storybook re-enactments, further work is needed to clarify the specific knowledges of written language that children appear to be using while re-enacting the storybook. Issues that relate to storybook re-enactments and emergent reading abilities concern the nature of children's dependent storybook re-enactments (i.e. when the child and adult "read together"), the influence of story structure on children's re-enactments, the role of self-correction in the re-creation of story text, and the significance of child-initiated dialogue with the adult during the re-enactment.

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Footnotes

[1]The data reported here are from the on-going study, "Children's Emergent Abilities to Read Favorite Storybooks." The research is partially supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation to Elizabeth Sulzby, Northwestern University, 2003 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201. The author thanks Arlene Cohen, director of the Wesley Day Care Center, Glenview, Illinois, the teachers and the children for their help. Valuable technical assistance in making the video and audio recordings of the re-enactments was provided by Trudy Tarkington and her staff from the Learning Resource Facility, School of Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

[2]The "Emergent Reading Ability Judgments for Favorite Storybooks" scale was developed by Elizabeth Sulzby, Northwestern University as a part of the project funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE-G-80-0176), "Beginning Readers' Developing Knowledges About Written Language" (BRDKAWL).

Appendix A

Emergent Reading Ability Judgments for Favorite Storybooks (ERAJFS) Abridged Version

Introduction. This is an abridged version of the ERAJFS scale developed by Sulzby (1982; Sulzby & Otto, 1982). The scale was designed to be used with children's independent re-enactments of favorite storybooks. The descriptions which follow usually characterize the majority of the speech utterances by the child in response to the book; however, occasionally a child's behavior fluctuates between levels.

A. ATTEMPTS WHICH ARE GOVERNED BY PRINT

1. Holistic attempts. Here the child creates a version almost exactly like the written version.

   (a) Independent reading. The child is actually reading the print independently, using comprehension, letter-sound knowledge, and known words in a coordinated fashion in re-creating the text. Miscues made show all aspects of independent reading.

   (b) Strategy-dependent. Here the child seems to be reading independently by creating a print-governed version of the text, but shows definite strategies keyed to the "aspectual" nature of reading attempts. Thus, the child's reading process does not seem to be fully "balanced" or integrated.

2. "Aspectual" attempts. In this category, the child focuses upon one or two aspects of reading. The following examples highlight each aspect separately; however, the child may show different combinations of behavior. The descriptions that follow do not imply order of acquisition.

   --LETTER/SOUND ASPECT. The child may treat reading as a sounding-out task and may laboriously try to sound-out words with varying degrees of success.

   --KNOWN WORD ASPECT. The child will go through meaningful text reading only words that s/he knows.

   --COMPREHENSION ASPECT. Comprehension here is "memory for text," rather than anticipated meaning. The child recites the text almost verbatim and clearly indicates that it is the print that is read. Actual tracking of the print seems to interfere with memory for text and the wording deteriorates.

3. Print-governed refusal. Here the child refuses to read and refuses to "pretend-read," insisting that print is what gets read and that s/he cannot read.

B. ATTEMPTS WHICH ARE GOVERNED BY PICTURES AND STORIES ARE FORMED.

1. Written language-like attempts.

(a) Verbatim-like attempts. Child recites story that is close to verbatim and uses written language phrases when departing from verbatim. Child uses self-correction behaviors as if attempting to retrieve exact wording of original. (Judgment of attempt is made by child's inferred intention, not accuracy.)

(b) Similar to written text. Child renders story that is similar to the original but not close to verbatim. Child creates patterns that are written language-like but not contained in the original. Child "reads" with "reading intonation" much of the time and the wording is like written language. The story created is a decontextualized, coherent whole.

(c) Created story, written influence. Child renders story that is primarily but not entirely decontextualized. The wording and intonation may be a mixture of oral language-like and written language-like speech. Story may depart from actual text in actual content or in match of content to pages.

2. Oral language-like attempts

(a) Story told for audience. Child tells the story from the pictures as if for an audience. The story forms a coherent whole and the child's intonation sounds like storytelling rather than reading. Sentence syntax and phrasing sound like speech, with a high degree of contextualization.

(b) Disconnected oral dramatic dialogue and/or interactive conversational comments. The overall attempt is disconnected but a story-like sequence can be inferred. The child may create dialogue to go along with the pictures, often depending upon "voices" for characters. Child may also give sentential comments that sound interactive rather than narrative. Mixture of present, present progressive, and past tenses add to judgment that attempt is disjointed in contrast with 2a which is coherent.

C. ATTEMPTS WHICH ARE GOVERNED BY PICTURES BUT STORIES ARE NOT FORMED.

1. Action-governed attempts. The child's comments sound as if s/he thinks the action in the picture is almost taking place here-and-now. Verb forms are usually present or present progressive; future-sounding statements, like "he's gonna catch him," can be inferred from the picture being examined. At times, the

comments and the child's pointing almost seem to be comments to self instead of to an audience; at other times, the child directs the adult with comments like, "Lookit. He's running." The child may skip parts of the book or re-cycle in varying orders.

2. Labelling and commenting attempts. The child comments on pictures to adult, naming items or parts or commenting on parts for the adult, e.g., "This is X," "Doggie," "Brush him teefs," etc. No coherent story is formed, Very young children skip many parts of the book and/or re-cycle in varying orders.

Table 1

Placement of Children on ERAJFS Scale

Child	January Pilot SB1	January Pilot SB2	May SB1	May SB2	August SB1	August SB2
Nicki (3-1)[1]	B2b	B2b	C1	B2b[2]	C2	B2b[3]
Mark (3-8)	C2	B2a	B1c	B1b[2]	B1a	B1c[3]
Maria (3-9)	C1	C1	C1	C1[2]	C1	B2b[3]
Kathy (3-11)	B1a	B1a	A1a	A1a[2]	A1a	A1a[3]

[1] Ages given are as of January 1, 1982

[2] Storybook re-enacted was Are You My Mother? by P.D. Eastman.

[3] Storybook re-enacted was A Pocket for Corduroy by D. Freeman.